

APHIS, Plant Protection and Quarantine

Plant Protection and Quarantine Officer
(Canine Officer)
GS-0436-09

DUTIES: The incumbent serves as a Plant Protection and Quarantine Officer at a port and/or domestic work site with the responsibility for enforcing Plant Protection and Quarantine regulations. More specifically, the incumbent:

Following standard PPQ procedures, inspects ships, aircraft, vehicles, passengers, railway cars, mail baggage, plants, plant products, and miscellaneous articles for restricted or prohibited agricultural commodities, animal byproducts, and pests that may be dangerous to the nation's agriculture.

Reviews manifests, incoming PPQ forms, consular invoices and other documents associated with the import of products, noting agricultural commodities on an inspection report based on the country of origin, type of commodity, pest risk, and the like. Selects material for inspection according to established sampling plan. Using field techniques, recognizes the presence and/or symptoms of plant pests. Distinguishes between domestic and cosmopolitan pests and those that are potentially dangerous to the agricultural industry. From the results of inspections, makes decisions as to the subsequent action such as: 1) release of non-prohibited products and materials, 2) determines the need for pre-entry treatments, and 3) refuses entry. movement and or seize, destroy, or safeguard prohibited, restrictive, or infested materials pending final disposition

Contacts landowners, farmers, nurserymen, warehousemen, trade representatives, brokers, and the like relative to securing permission to conduct surveys, enforce quarantine regulations, and advise on PPQ programs and regulations.

Coordinates and conducts surveys and inspection to determine the presence and density of plant pests and other environmental, physical, biological, and ecological factors that may affect the injurious nature of plant pests.

Interprets and enforces Federal and parallel State domestic quarantines and regulatory orders restricting the shipment of plants, plant products, animal byproducts, and other materials; into, within, and out of the United States. Upon compliance with regulations issues certificates or permits the movement of regulated articles. Prepares and executes compliance agreements with cooperators, catering devices, establishments, and the like. Review and revises cooperative agreements as conditions warrant.

Plans, conducts, and/or supervises various treatments such as disinfection, sterilization, fumigation, and the like of plant pests. Determines and ensures that the proper dosage, time of exposure, temperature, and safety conditions are met to avoid damage to the products.

Determines the appropriate measures to use to eradicate the pests. Decides when re-inspection of infested sites shall be made to determine the incidence or density of plant pests and the effect of control operations.

Cares for and handles detector dog at ports of entry having a major postal facility for processing incoming international mail. By using 'mail profiles' determines high risk mail and directs dog to it. The detector dog, working on a moving conveyor belt, identifies packages containing prohibited agricultural items. The Officer opens suspect packages, inspects contents and reseals packages.

Keeps daily record of inspection activities, cost effectiveness, canine health and behavior. and detector dog's proficiency.

With use of detector dog, inspects carriers such as vessels, aircraft. vehicles, and various types of cargo to identify possible prohibited agricultural items.

Conducts continuing training program for detector dog. Exercises dog off job and cares for general well being of dog on and off the job.

Develops and conducts training program for postal employees to make them aware of agricultural quarantine programs and skilled at making referrals of packages containing agricultural products.

FACTOR LEVELS:

1. Knowledge Required by the Position: Knowledge of biological and agricultural science and of Plant Protection and Quarantine programs, activities, and regulations sufficient to independently apply established methods and procedures in the performance of survey, control, and regulatory work, and generally recognizes plant pests of economic significance.

Knowledge of farming operations, crops, and characteristics of parasitic plant pests (including insects and other plants) sufficient to effectively plan and oversee a control program in a designated geographical area.

Knowledge of substances such as fumigants, herbicides, pesticides, and the equipment associated with these substances sufficient to use them safely and effectively in plant protection and quarantine activities.

Knowledge of various treatment methods such as refrigeration, vapor heat, and dry heat sufficient to independently use these methods or to evaluate the effectiveness of the application of such methods in carrying out treatment and control activities.

Knowledge of the transportation and shipping industry's practices, procedures and carrier modes sufficient to enforce quarantines governing movement of injurious plant pests, diseases, and animal byproducts and to inspect various conveyances.

Knowledge of canine care and behavior in order to train detector dog, handle dog in inspection activities and ensure humane treatment and well being of dog.

2. Supervisory Controls: The supervisor assigns the officer to a particular designated work area or project and provides special instructions on changes in policies or procedures. The officer works relatively independent in carrying out assigned duties and responsibilities. Actions and decisions are generally made within the timeframe of applicable guides and precedents. Considerable independent judgment is exercised in the case of an adverse decision which would result in a large unexpected expense or loss. Potentially controversial decisions are referred to the supervisor for concurrence. Work is reviewed through formal or informal reports, discussions of actions taken, or through occasional observation of actual work performance. The work is reviewed for adequacy of results and adherence to established policies and procedures.

3. Guidelines: Guides include agency regulations, directives, manuals, treatment instructions, and other administrative guidelines. The guides do not cover all problems, situations, or circumstances encountered. The Officer must use experience and judgment in applying the guides when taking the necessary actions to prevent the introduction of plant pests or solving problems in surveying or regulatory work.

4. Complexity: Assignments involves the inspection of cargo, baggage, railway cars, aircraft, ships, plants, plant material, animal byproducts and planning and conducting pest detection surveys to enforce regulations governing the movement of plant pests and field operation designed to control, suppress, or eradicate plant pests. For inspection assignments the officer considers such factors as the country of origin, the type of pest normally associated with a commodity, and the destination of the material and its end use. In planning various survey and regulatory operations, the officer considers such factors as resources available, degree of infestation, changing patterns of infestation, hazard of spread, and crops. Actions are generally made within the framework applicable guides and precedents. Problems are usually traditional in nature and complex situations are referred to the supervisor for solutions.

5. Scope and Effect: The purpose of the work is to enforce regulations in accordance with established criteria, various regulations which govern the movement of prohibited, restricted, and unrestricted plants, plant material, and animal byproducts and which are designed to prevent the spread of foreign pests and diseases. The work contributes to the health and marketability of agricultural and animal resources and to the public's understanding of the need for, and voluntary compliance with, agricultural and other quarantines. Additionally, farmers, ranchers, and other members of the public are protected against the effects of destructive insects, diseases, and weeds.

6. Personal Contacts: Personal contacts are with business and personal travelers including persons of various nationalities, socioeconomic groups, and professional levels; e.g., diplomats, clerks, nonresidents with no English speaking capability, prominent people who are used to deferential treatment, salesmen, officers of Federal and State enforcement agencies, importers and exporters, nursery personnel, contractors, employees of transportation and shipping companies, including moderately unstructured. These may take place in diverse places such as a ship's engine room, store room, or bridge; on board aircraft at international borders, or in warehouses.

7. Purpose of Contacts: The contacts are to enforce regulations; to explain methods, procedures, and objectives of the Plant Protection and Quarantine programs; obtain voluntary cooperation of the interested parties; and to search for and locate plant pests. Usually the people with whom the officer interacts are cooperative (or at least neutral in their attitude); however, the officer occasionally is called upon to use tact and persuasion to overcome the resistance of persons who are reluctant to cooperate for various reasons; e.g., fear of property confiscation or situations that develop because of misunderstanding due to personality conflicts.

8. Physical Demands: The work requires some physical exertion such as long periods of standing at passenger inspection counters or lengthy microscopy sessions, recurring walking, crouching, stooping and reaching. Dexterity and physical coordination as required in order to handle a live animal (detector dog) on a regular basis.

9. Work Environment: The work involves such tasks as working around farms, railroad yards, aircraft cargo areas and docks, in some of these areas, protective clothing such as hard hats must be worn. The employee also works around poisons and toxic fumigants and may wear protective clothing such as masks and goggles.